


Scotland may lower Drink Driving Limit



The Scottish Government today published proposals seeking views on lowering the drink driving limit in Scotland.

The consultation follows the recent transfer of the power to set the level of the drink drive limit from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament. It seeks views on reducing the existing blood/alcohol limit of 80mg/100ml to 50 mg/100ml and consequential equivalent reductions in the breath and urine limit.

 Speaking today outside the Scottish Parliament as he launched the consultation alongside Deputy Chief Constable Tom Ewing, Road Policing lead for ACPOS, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

“This Government has made it clear that we want a lower drink driving limit as we believe it will help make Scotland’s roads safer. While drink driving is now rightly recognised by the vast majority of motorists as dangerous and reckless, too many drivers still ignore the warnings and put lives at risk by drinking and driving. The consequences can be devastating for victims, their families and our communities.

“The launch of this consultation today marks another important step in tackling the scourge of drink driving.

“We strongly believe that reducing the drink driving limit will save lives. Tragically, the latest Reported Road Casualty figures estimate that just over one in nine deaths on Scotland’s roads involve drivers who are over the limit. This equates to an average of 30 deaths on Scotland’s roads every year.

“That is 30 too many, and we are proposing action to help reduce this number. This consultation seeks views on reducing the drink driving limit to a level which would bring Scotland into line with most of Europe and which will help save lives on our roads.

“Estimates of how many lives can be saved with a lower limit do vary, but there is evidence that indicates between three and 17 lives each year could be saved on Scottish roads from a lower limit of 50mg/100ml.

“With the UK Government having failed to take action for many years to reduce the drink driving limit, it is only now, with recently secured Scotland Act powers, that the Scottish Government is able to set the drink driving limit in Scotland. This swift use of the newly devolved powers on drink driving shows we are ready to make use of these new powers to help make Scotland a safer place.

“I urge anyone with an interest in road safety to make their voice heard through this consultation.”

Deputy Chief Constable Tom Ewing, secretary of Road Policing for the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, said:

“There is a clear link between drink driving and road crashes which cause death or serious injury. Despite extensive campaigns by ACPOS and our partners in law enforcement and government, it seems that the message is not getting through to all motorists that drinking and driving is dangerous, anti social and against the law.

“We welcome an opportunity to take part in a wide consultation on a reduction of the current drink drive limits. It has always been the position of ACPOS that drivers should not drink alcohol at all before getting behind the wheel but any lowering of the limit could lead to a reduction in those tempted to do so.

“That way we can continue the good work already being done to make Scotland’s roads safer and work positively towards the targets laid out in the Scottish Road Safety Framework to 2020.”

Lord Advocate, Frank Mulholland QC, said:

“As prosecutors we know from bitter experience the misery and suffering that driving under the influence can cause. It all too often results in serious injury or loss of life with around 10 per cent of the deaths on Scottish roads involving drivers who are over the legal limit.

“In recent years the added deterrent of Vehicle Forfeiture has had an impact on drink drivers with the number of offenders reducing and this consultation is another important step in tackling needless deaths and injuries on our roads.

“The public can be assured that the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service give road safety a high priority and by working with colleagues in ACPOS, Scottish Government, Road Safety Scotland and Scottish Court service, we will do all in our power to make Scotland a safer place to live and drive.”